EPIC COMICS

#2 IN AN EIGHT-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

ELEKTRA

Assassin

ELEKTRA 2
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ELEKTRA Assassin

—THE LOST YEARS—

FIVE KILLED IN ASYLUM REVOLT

VALLEY OF PEACE, South America—Local authorities refuse to comment on reports of a violent uprising of inmates in the Valley of Peace Institution for the Criminally Insane.

The Institution has been the object of criticism by opponents of the present regime, who claim that it is used to submit political prisoners to detestable living conditions and torture.

A former employee of the Institution claims that the revolt was led by a woman prisoner who killed a guard and a medical team, shortly before she was to be lobotomized.

San Concepcion authorities refused to draw any connection between the Valley of Peace uprising and the murder of two San Concepcion police officers by an unidentified woman four months ago.

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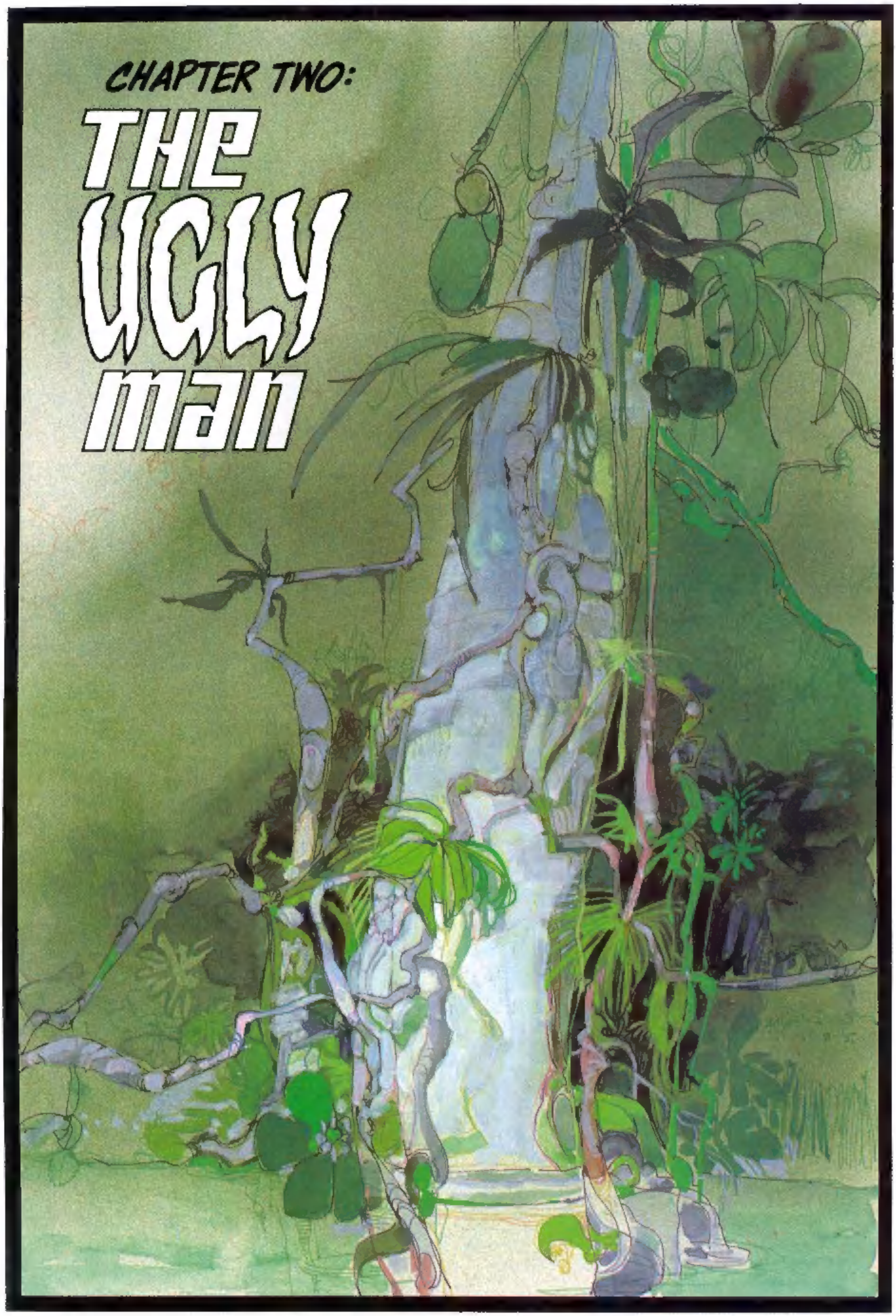

CHAPTER TWO:
THE UGLY MAN

THERE IS A **BLANK** SPACE--

--THEN THE SUN BURNS **BRIGHTLY** BUT DOES NOT BURN AWAY THE WATER IN THE **AIR** OR ON MY **BODY**--

--THE **LEAVES** ARE **THICK** ABOUT ME AND COVERED WITH **INSECTS**--

--SOME OF WHICH ARE PAINTED PRETTY **COLORS**. THE **LEAVES** LOOK **SMOOTH**--

--BUT THAT IS A **LIE**. THEY ARE **ROUGH** LIKE A **CAT'S TONGUE** AND TRY TO SCRAPE THE MEAT FROM MY **BONES**--

I MUST **KEEP** WHAT MEAT I **HAVE**.

I MUST KEEP **MOVING**...

I WILL **REMEMBER** --SOMETIME **SOON** --WHY I AM **HERE** --WHAT I MUST **DO**.

ALL THAT IS **IMPORTANT** NOW IS MY **TRAINING**--

--MY **TRAINING**--

--IT COMES **BACK** TO ME WHEN I **CALL** IT AS **ALL** MY MEMORIES DO.

I CONTROL IT AS I NOW CONTROL MY **MIND**--

--I CALL A VOICE FROM **YEARS** AGO --FROM **FAR** AWAY--

The trials of mind and body have **BENT** you to us, Elektra.

You have **SLAIN** what is **SOFT** in you.

You are **CLEAN**...

...never **AGAIN** can you live as others do. Should you turn from **US**, we will **KILL** you.

Should you turn from the **CODE**, you shall kill **YOUR-SELF**.

Your eyes have been opened to the **DARK** ways.

Your soul is touched by the **HIDDEN FORCES**.

You will **DANCE** with them!...

...or **PERISH**.

--THE **JONIN'S** VOICE--

--THE **JONIN** --**LOVED** TO TALK--

You are **NINJA**--

Ever on your lips must be the **SIX ORDERS**.

Though the moment be **TERRIBLE** or **ECSTATIC**...

...you will RECITE them...one by one...

...Protect the BODY. It is your WEAPON.

ALREADY THE BLEEDING STOPS--

--STRENGTH FLOWS TO ME FROM PACKED MOSS AND BUGS-- THE SIXTH ORDER IS OBEYED--

FEEL NO PAIN.

THE FIFTH, TOO, IS OBSERVED --MY ARMS ARE LOVELY LASHING THINGS FAR FAR FROM ME--

--BUT THIS THINKING--

Seek the DARKNESS and be SILENT.

--THIS THINKING WILL ROB ME OF MY POWER--

--IT IS FOOLISH--

--I MUST STOP IT--

--MUST SHUT THE JONIN UP--

--MAKE HIM SMALL--

The OLD WAYS and the ELEMENTS. These are your ALLIES.

NO ONE is INNOCENT. This must NEVER be FORGOTTEN.

--HE IS SILLY--

--MAKE HIM SMALL--

And the FIRST ORDER

on which SUCCESS and LIFE EVER DEPENDS...

--FINALLY, THE SILENCE COMES--

--FINALLY, THE BLANKNESS--

--THE **SUN**, HOT--

--**MOSQUITOS**, HUNGRY FOR BLOOD--

--THE MOON, COLD--

--A **FLOWER** THAT HOLDS **POISON** TO KILL **MANY** MEN--

--SUDDENLY, **SALIVA** IN MY THROAT--

--RAZOR **PAIN** IN MY **STOMACH**--

--HUNGER SO **FIERCE**--

--IT ALMOST **HIDES** THE **SMELL** OF THE THING **BEHIND** ME--

--IT **ARCS** AND **HISSES**--

--SO **STUPID**--

--SO **VICIOUS**--

--SO **BEAUTIFUL**--

--LIKE A SINGLE **MUSCLE** IT **EN-FOLDS** ME--

--MY **BONES** ARE **DRIED WOOD** IN ITS GRIP--

--I **RELISH** IN THE MOMENT--

--MY RIBS FLEX **INWARD**--

--I FLOAT **BREATHLESS**--

--I FIND HIS THOUGHT-LESS LIZARD MIND--

--LET IT **WAKE** MY MOST **ANCIENT** SELF--

--ANOTHER **JUNGLE**--

--ANOTHER **AGE**--

--AN ENEMY'S **BLOOD**--

--IT SHOULD BE **COOKED**--

--BUT SOMEHOW MY **HUNGER** IS **GONE**--

--DAYS GO
--NO NEED
TO THINK--

--AND HERE THE JUNGLE **BREAKS** AND **MEN** ARE CAMPED--

--WITH HUGE **CAMERAS** AND GLARING **LAMPS** THAT MAKE NO **SENSE** IN THE DAYLIGHT--

--BURNING **TOBACCO**--

--COLOMBIAN **COFFEE**--

-- HERE I WILL FIND A WAY **OUT** OF THE JUNGLE--

--I MUST **HURRY**--

--I HAVE GONE TOO **LONG** WITHOUT **WATER**-- STILL I CANNOT HELP BUT **WATCH**--

--THEY **BIND** THE **WOMAN** AND ORDER HER TO **SCREAM**--

--HER **BREASTS** ARE **HUGE**--

--THEY SHINE THE **LAMPS** ON HER--

--LOOSE A **CAT** TO **DEVOUR** HER--

--BUT THE **CAT** IS **OLD** AND **DULL** AND **FAT** AND FILLED WITH **POISONS**--

--A **MAN** WITH A **GUN**--

--HE STANDS LIKE A **CHAMPION** BEFORE THE **CAT**--

--BEFORE THE **CAMERAS**--

--HE COCKS THE GUN--

--THE CAT IS TOO SICK TO EVEN ROAR--

--SCREAMING MEN--

--WIRES BROUGHT TOGETHER--

--FIRE--

--THEN MY ARMS NO LONGER SHAKE. MY THROAT HAS SHRUNK TO ITS PROPER SIZE.

I HAVE HAD WATER BUT THIS I CANNOT REMEMBER.

HOT AIR MADE COOL BY MOVEMENT.

--ANGRY BEES--

--NO--NOT BEES --VOICES-- SPANISH VOICES.

FROM THE RADIO IN THE JEEP.

THE NEWS.

THEY SPEAK QUICKLY AND PRECISELY-- THEY SAY MANY THINGS THAT ARE NOT IMPORTANT.

--STILL I LISTEN--

--AT LAST I HEAR THE NAME--

--REICH--

AMBASSADOR REICH.

THE MAN I MUST KILL.

THE VOICE CHANGES TO AMERICAN.

HE ACCUSES REICH OF BEING A PAWN OF WAR-SEEKING NATIONS.

SAN CONCEPCION 5 K. M.

THE VOICE TURNS SPANISH AGAIN. THE CAT FOULS THE BACK SEAT OF THE JEEP.

I DO NOT KNOW WHY I LAUGH.

--SUDDENLY, I AM IN COMBAT.

--HE LOOKS AT ME, ASTONISHED BY SUCH A SIMPLE STROKE--

--HE SUCKS AIR AS ONE NEVER SHOULD--

--HE IS NOT REICH--

--BEFORE I KILL HIM I SHOULD HAVE A REASON.

--A PICTURE COMES TO ME-- A WALL, COVERED WITH PLAQUES--

--I DID NOT COME HERE TO KILL HIM.

--I CAME TO LEARN HOW MUCH SKILL I HAVE LOST.

MY RIGHT ARM IS SLOW--MY STOMACH IS SOFT--

I SPIN--MY HEAD GOES LIGHT--

--I AM NOT ONE TENTH MYSELF.

--SHAME AND A GIFT FROM THE MAN--

--THE BLANKNESS SPEEDS--

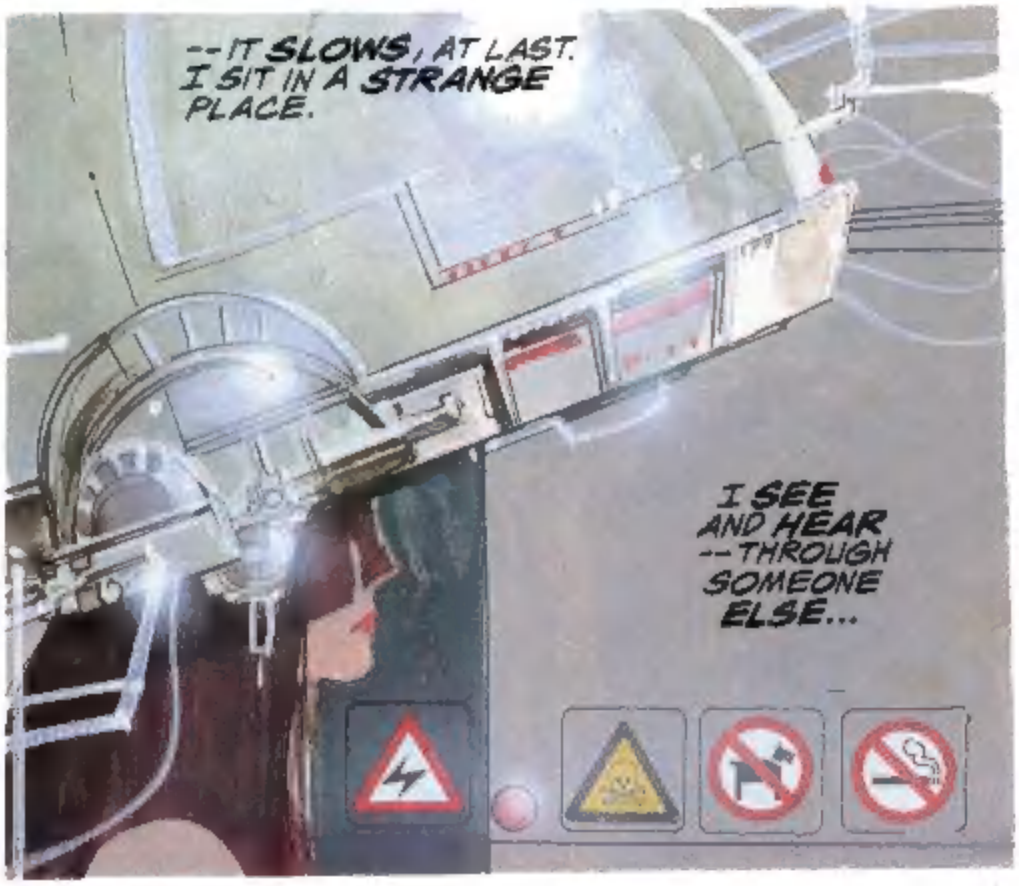
--TOO FAST--
--SOLDIERS COUGH BLOOD--

--TYPED PAPERS--

--DAYS AND WEEKS LOST-- TOO FAST--

--THE UGLY MAN--
--WHO IS THE UGLY MAN?

--TOO FAST--
--TOO FAST--
--MAKES NO SENSE--


--IT SLOWS, AT LAST. I SIT IN A STRANGE PLACE.
I SEE AND HEAR --THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE...

HE SAYS SOMETHING I DO NOT UNDER-STAND ABOUT TWO WOMEN AND A DOG--

SHIT. THAT PROBABLY MADE IT ON THE TAPE.

THE TAPE--I AM LISTENING AND WATCHING A TAPE --THAT MAKES SOUND ONLY IN MY HEAD--

--THE HAIR ON THE BACK OF MY NECK BRISTLES AS HE FILLS ME WITH ANGRY FIRE--

--BEAKER, HE SAYS --IN HIS MIND--

--BEAKER'S GOING TO LOVE THAT JOKE.

THIS BRAIN FEED IS THE WORST. BUT THOSE DICK-LESS WONDERS UP IN RESEARCH --JESUS, THEY THINK IT'S THE FINAL SOLUTION TO WORLD COMMUNISM.

CAN'T GO OUT FOR A SAND-WICH WITHOUT A GODDAMN IMPLANT.

IMPLANT. YES.

A RECORDER IN HIS BRAIN...

--CHICKENSHIT MISSION TO A CHICKENSHIT GUN-PORT TO FIND OUT WHO KILLED THEIR CHICKENSHIT PRESIDENTE.

AND STILL THEY'VE GOT TO HAVE THEIR HOME MOVIES...

...SO THOSE IVY LEAGUE **FAGGOTS** IN **PSYCH** CAN **WATCH** AND SWAP **JARGON** ABOUT **PHALLIC FIXATIONS** AND **OEDIPAL OBSESSIONS.**

CHRIST...

...MAN OUGHT TO **OWN** HIS THOUGHTS...

...SHIT. I KNOW WHAT **BEAKER'S** GOING TO SAY TO **THAT.**

HE'LL **START** BY **REMINDING** ME THAT IT ISN'T ENTIRELY MY OWN **HEAD--**

--NOT WITH SIX INCHES OF REMOVABLE PLASTIC **SKULL** THAT LET THE **SURGEONS** JUMP RIGHT IN WITHOUT PUTTING ME **OUT.**

THEN HE'LL REMIND ME THAT I SIGNED THE **RE-LEASE.**

IT WAS THE **FIRST** THING YOU HAD ME DO WITH THE **ARM.**

AND I KNOW I SHOULD BE **GRATEFUL...**

...GRATEFUL I'VE STILL GOT MY OWN PAIR OF **BALLS.**

PERRY OVER THERE-- HE NEVER BITCHES AT YOU, DOES HE?

AGENCY'S LIKE A MOTHER TO PERRY.

BUT THEN, [redacted]RY'S AN ASS-HOLE.

MOVE IT, GARRETT--

GARRETT-- HIS NAME IS--

YOU THERE--

--DON'T MOVE--

THE SHOUT GROWS IN ME BEFORE I CALL IT--

--MY TEETH RATTLE AS IT LEAVES--

--SIMPLE TECHNIQUE--

--THERE WILL BE MORE OF THEM-- TIME IS SHORT--

--THE TAPE IS FIVE DAYS OLD --I FIND THE BUTTON TO MAKE THE HOURS FLY--

--OVERSPICED MEAL--

--MORE DRINK--

--MORE FOUL WORDS--

--GARRETT'S APARTMENT--

--A BEATING--

--SCRAPED MOST OF THE FAKE SKIN OFF HIS KNUCKLES.

ONE MORE TIME--

WHO KILLED CARLOS HUEVOS?

THE POOR BASTARD PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING.

IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO MAKE THE SUBVERSIVE LIST IN SAN CONCEPCION--

--BUT HE LOOKS LIKE AN INTEL-LECTUAL.

THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR PERRY.

WHERE YOU GOING, GARRETT?

PHONE RANG AN HOUR AGO. BACK WHEN OUR GUEST HAD TEETH.

KLIK

THIS TIME IT'S AN OLD WOMAN NAMED GONZALES.

NOBODY TOLD MRS. GONZALES THAT THE SAN CONCEPCION VOTER REGISTRATION OFFICE DISCONNECTED ITS TELEPHONE A YEAR AGO.

I GOT THE NUMBER...

...AND EVERY DAY I GET A DOZEN CALLS FROM WOULD-BE VOTERS.

THIS COUNTRY'S BEEN A DICTATORSHIP SINCE WORLD WAR II.

GUESS PEOPLE LIKE THEIR ILLUSIONS.

YOU'RE A SCREAM, GARRETT.

MAYBE I SHOULD BUY YOU A HOOKER TO BREATHE HEAVY INTO THAT THING.

YOU MISSED THE FUN. GARR WENT TO WORK ON HIS EYES...

...AND HE CONFESSED TO LAYING DOWN THE GREEN FOR THE HUEVOS POP.

SO HE STARTS LAUGHING --LAUGHING BUBBLES, RIGHT, SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT A TWO-DOLLAR WHORE FROM BOLIVIA.

YOU FINISH HIM?

OH, YEAH.

THAT RINGING --WHY DON'T THEY HEAR--

--NO-- IT'S NOT ON THE TAPE--

--HERE. NOW.

AN ALARM--

DOWN THIS WAY--

--GUNS READY--

--THERE--

--FIRE AT--

GG--

--GOD OH MY GOD--

WHAT THE--

KBLAM

OH MY GG--

--STOPPED IT--

--CHRIST SHE STOPPED A BULLET--

--PULL BACK--

BOLIVIA. CHRIST--

--GODDAMN BORDER GUARDS TAKE MY FLASK--

--FORTY BUCKS AMERICAN TO MAKE THE OFFICER ON DUTY GO BLIND AND DEAF FOR HALF AN HOUR.

PERRY JUST GRINS AND LETS ME PUT UP THE WHOLE WAD MYSELF, KNOWING HOW MANY PISSANT FORMS I'LL HAVE TO FILL OUT TO GET THE EXPENSE APPROVED.

STICKING ME LIKE THAT PUTS PERRY IN SUCH A WARM MOOD HE SETTLES FOR BREAKING THIS ONE'S WRIST...

...NOT CRIMINAL. POLITICAL PRISONER...

...THIS WOMAN... I SAW... SAW HER...

...I... MY NERVES ...I...

NERVES--

--LUCKY HE GOT LUNGS, RIGHT, GARR?

MAN SAID THIS WOULD HELP YOUR NERVES.

YES. YES.

YOU'RE SWEET, GARR.

BETWEEN THE SHAKES AND THE BROKEN WRIST HE MAKES TWISTING THE CAP A REAL EVENT.

WE WATCH AND DON'T HELP, JUST TO PROVE WE'RE BASTARDS.

IT GETS DOWN TO A *FIGHT* BETWEEN THE *BOTTLE* AND HIS MAL-NOURISHED *GUMS.*

THE *GUMS* WIN. HE KEEPS HIS *TEETH--*

--AND *REWARDS* HIMSELF WITH A *TRIPLE* DOSE.

THAT PUTS HIM TWO *MINUTES* FROM *LIFT-OFF* --AND TWO *DAYS* FROM *SPLASHDOWN.*

TWO DAYS IN *BOLIVIA.*

PERRY BREAKS HIS *OTHER* WRIST.

THE *WOMAN*...SHE WAS A *MERCENARY*... VERY *EXPENSIVE*...

SILENT SHE WAS, AND NO *DRINKER*... WOULD NOT *EAT* WITH US...

...AND SHE NEVER *SMILED*--NOT UNTIL...UNTIL...

...WE WERE *SURROUNDED,* NINE OF US, AT THE *WAR MEMORIAL.* OUR GUNS WERE *EMPTY*...

...AND SO WE PASSED THE *CYANIDE.* SHE *WATCHED* AS *SEVEN GOOD MEN* TOOK THE CAPSULES...

...THEN, SHE *LAUGHED*...

...IT WAS NOT A *WOMAN'S* LAUGH...

AS MY COMRADES STIFFENED AND GAGGED, SHE LEAPED... TWELVE FEET INTO THE AIR...

...ON ALL SIDES THERE WERE EXPLOSIONS. I COULD SEE NO PLANE...

...THE FASCISTS... SOME CAUGHT FIRE AND DANCED LIKE CLOWNS...OTHERS SIMPLY FELL, AS THOUGH GOD HAD PULLED THE LIFE FROM THEM...

...THEN...I SAW THE FASCIST CAPTAIN...

...ROARING, FIRING HIS PISTOL...I WONDERED WHY HE DID NOT WEAR HIS RAPIER...

...AND LIKE A PIÑATA, THE CAPTAIN BURST APART-- CLEFT FROM SHOULDER TO THIGH...

...AND... BEHIND HIM ...THE RAPIER IN HER HAND... HER BLACK HAIR AND CLOTHING SOAKED IN HUMAN BLOOD... IT WAS SHE...

...AND STILL SHE LAUGHED...

...SHE IS NINJA. SHE IS DEATH ITSELF...

YES--THIS WAS TWO DAYS AGO --I CAME TO COLLECT MY TWO DOLLARS FOR KILLING HUEVOS--

--FOUND MY CLIENT DEAD--

--I BEGAN TO HUNT GARRETT--

--AND HE BEGAN TO HUNT ME...

NOT GOING TO PUKE, ARE YOU, GARR?

...THE SOLDIER BESIDE ME-- IS TRAINED TO CONTROL HIS BREATHING--

--TO CONCEAL THE FACT THAT HE'S AWAKE.

HIS DEATH CAN WAIT...

...ALL THE WAY TO BOLIVIA FOR A LOAD OF SHIT ABOUT NINJA...

...SHOULD LEARN TO KICK ASS LIKE PERRY. I'D BE OUT IN THE FIELD RIGHT NOW, INSTEAD OF MILKING THE DATA BANKS FOR FAIRY TALES.

NINJA. SHIT.

I FEED THE WORD IN. STRAY REPORTS POP UP, ALL LOOKING LIKE LAZY FIELD WORK...

...NINJA. JESUS.

I FOCUS ON THE PAST SIX MONTHS AND THIS CONTINENT. THE BANK SPITS OUT FOUR CASES. TWO ARE PURE BULL-SHIT. ONE IS CARLOS HUEVOS, HIT BY A CROSS-BOW BOLT.

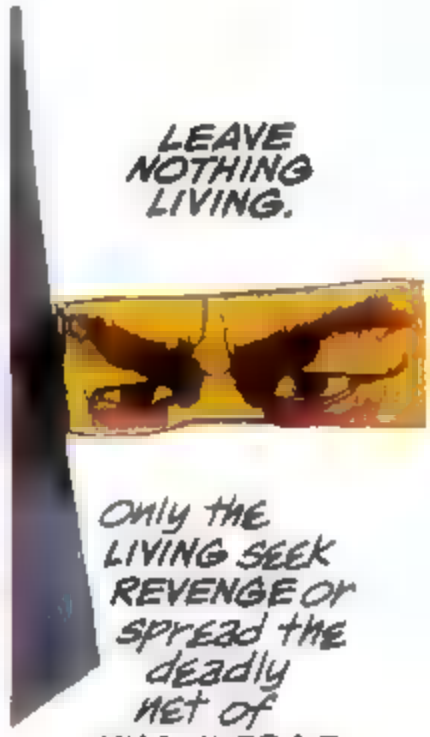
THE LAST ONE IS DAMN WEIRD...

--NOW, BENEATH THE COMPUTER'S HUM, I HEAR LAUGHTER--

--THE JONIN'S LAUGHTER--

--HE LAUGHS AT MY MISTAKE--AT THE ASYLUM--I DID NOT OBEY THE FIRST ORDER--

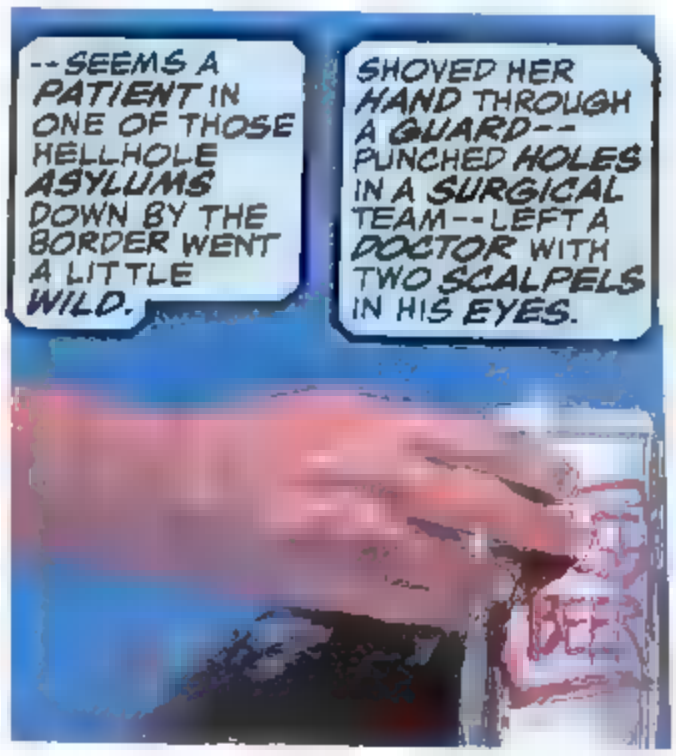
LEAVE NOTHING LIVING.



Only the LIVING SEEK REVENGE or spread the deadly net of KNOWLEDGE...

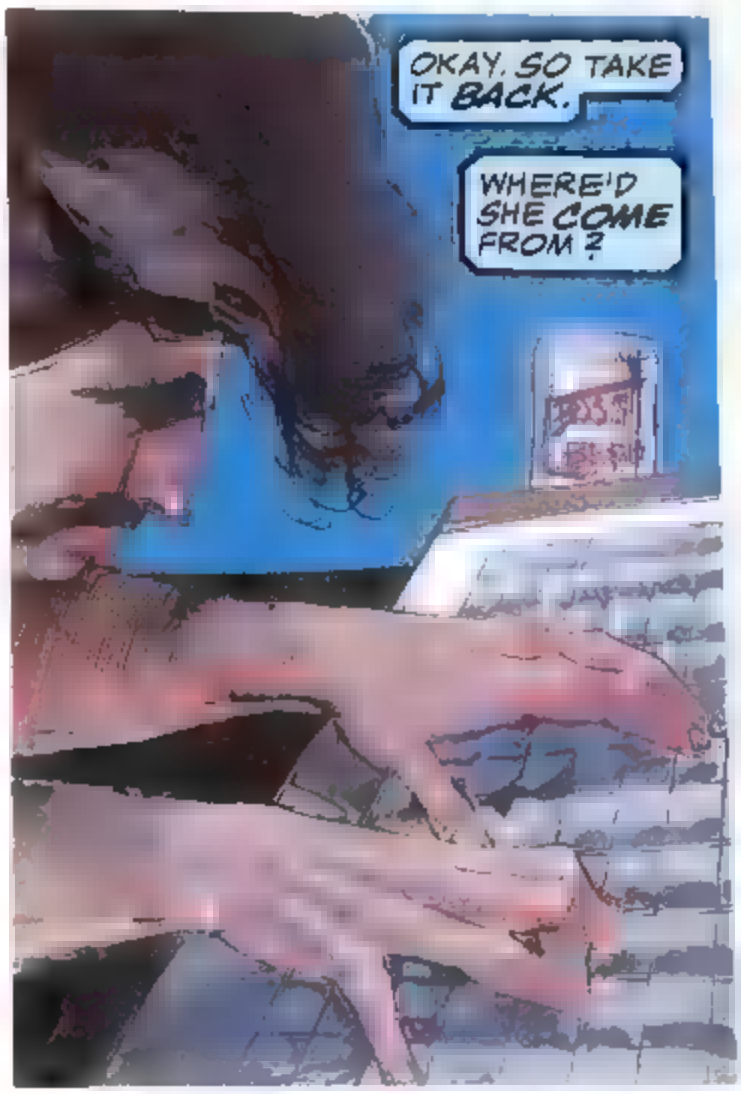
--SEEMS A PATIENT IN ONE OF THOSE HELLHOLE ASYLUMS DOWN BY THE BORDER WENT A LITTLE WILD.

SHOVED HER HAND THROUGH A GUARD--PUNCHED HOLES IN A SURGICAL TEAM--LEFT A DOCTOR WITH TWO SCALPELS IN HIS EYES.



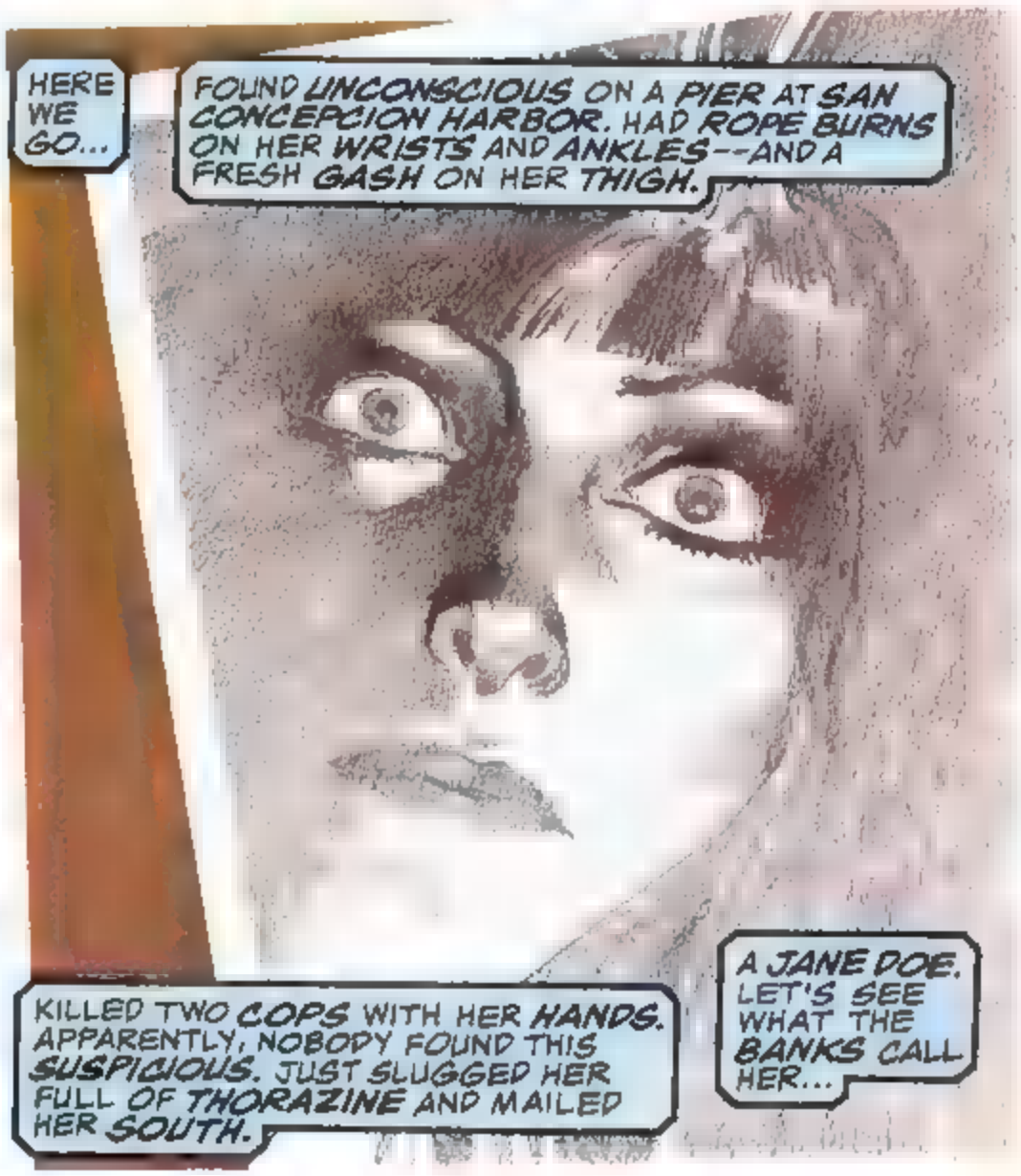
OKAY, SO TAKE IT BACK.

WHERE'D SHE COME FROM?



HERE WE GO...

FOUND UNCONSCIOUS ON A PIER AT SAN CONCEPCION HARBOR. HAD ROPE BURNS ON HER WRISTS AND ANKLES--AND A FRESH GASH ON HER THIGH.



KILLED TWO COPS WITH HER HANDS. APPARENTLY, NOBODY FOUND THIS SUSPICIOUS. JUST SLUGGED HER FULL OF THORAZINE AND MAILED HER SOUTH.

A JANE DOE. LET'S SEE WHAT THE BANKS CALL HER...

I CROSS-REFERENCE THE PHOTO OUT THE ASS. THE FIRST NAME THAT COMES UP BELONGS TO A *NUN*. THE SECOND TO A *CORPSE*.

THE *THIRD* ONE FITS HER LIKE A FRESH PAIR OF *PANTY-HOSE*.

ELEKTRA.

ELEKTRA NATCHIOS, N.M.I., DAUGHTER OF GREEK DIPLOMAT HUGO NATCHIOS AND HIS WIFE CHRISTINA.

TWELVE YEARS PAROCHIAL SCHOOL... POOR GRADES, HIGH I.Q., LIKE I GIVE A SHIT...

...SPOTTY STUFF ABOUT PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT...

...AND TRAINING IN *MARTIAL ARTS*.

BLACK BELT AT AGE *TWELVE*.

YOU'RE LOOKING *GOOD*, ELEKTRA.

ONE YEAR AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. DADDY MUST HAVE FIXED THINGS WITH THE GRADES.

DADDY SHOT TO DEATH BY POLICE WHILE HELD HOSTAGE BY SOCIALIST LIBERATION FRONT...

...THEN *NADA*. NOT A DAMN THING IN FOUR YEARS.

NO *JOB*, NO *HOME*, NO *MARRIAGE*, NO *DEATH*. JUST FELL OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

SHIT.

PROBABLY BECAME A BAG LADY...

...WHAT THE *HELL*...

...*HOLE*--

--IN MY *BEER*--

--CHRIST--

--IN HERE WITH ME--HIT THE FLOOR, YOU ASSHOLE--

THUD

--JESUS GODDAMN CHRIST MY PISTOL--

--GONE CHRIST I WAS WEARING IT--

--GOT TO BE HER SHIT IT'S GOT TO BE--

--BITCH I GOT A SURPRISE FOR YOU--

--UNDER THE FLOOR--

--EVEN THE AGENCY DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS BABY--

--COME ON BITCH--

--COME AND GET IT--

KLIK KLAK

--WHAT THE HELL WHAT THE HELL--

--FELL APART HOW THE HELL--

NINJA.

CHRIST WHERE THE HELL IS SHE--

--THE KNIFE--

--BITCH DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE KNIFE--

--OR MAYBE-- MAYBE IT DOESN'T MATTER--

--MAYBE YOU ALREADY--

RING

KLIK

MY OWN RECORDED VOICE, SPEAKING FIRST YEAR SPANISH--

--THEN A CHUCKLE--

--THAT'S WAY TOO SEXY FOR PERRY'S MONEY.

SOMETHING VERY COLD CRAWLS UP MY SPINE.

CHOK

GGOD--
--DON'T--

JESUS--
--GRAB HER--
MORE SOLDIERS--

--I HAVEN'T TIME TO KILL THEM ALL--
--NOT YET--

OH, JESUS--

SLAM

--GARRETT'S APARTMENT--

--TWO DAYS AGO--

--I CAN ALMOST TASTE THE--

--BOURBON DOES A HEAD-ON WITH MY ADRENALIN RUSH, KICKING MY BRAIN LOOSE IN MY SKULL.

I LET IT FLOAT, ROLLING THE THOUGHT AROUND AND WATCHING THE LIGHTS OF THE BANK WINK AT ME LIKE A CHRISTMAS TREE.

NO HARM IN THINKING...

...EVEN IF THE SCHEME THAT'S GROWING LIKE A SNOWBALL AS IT ROLLS MEANS COMMITTING TREASON...

IT COULD [redacted] MY WAY OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE OF A LIFE. IT COULD PAY A FORTUNE.

IT COULD GET ME KILLED.

IT'S NOT A COMPLICATED SCHEME, OR EVEN CLEVER. HELL, EVEN PERRY COULD'VE COME UP WITH IT.

PERRY...

...IF THE BITCH IS ON TO ME, SHE'S ON TO PERRY. HE'S GOOD AS DEAD IF I DON'T WARN HIM.

GOOD AS DEAD.

NO HARM IN *THINKING*...

I'VE STUMBLED ONTO A FORCE THAT'S ONLY SUPPOSED TO EXIST IN *MYTH*. IF THE MYTH IS *TRUE*--

--AND AS OF *TEN MINUTES* AGO I'M A *BELIEVER*--

--THIS IS A *TREASURE* OF *SKILLS* AND *TECHNIQUES* THAT COULD *REVOLUTIONIZE* THE FIELD OF *ESPIONAGE*.

THE BANK KEEPS *WINKING*, FLIRTING. WAITING FOR ME TO *TRANSMIT* THE *DATA* TO THE AGENCY'S *CENTRAL SYSTEM*.

I LOSE MY *BALANCE* FOR A SECOND --MUST BE THE *BOOZE*--

--AND JUST BY *ACCIDENT*--

--MY HAND HITS THE *KEYBOARD* --MY-- *FINGER* HITS THE BUTTON THAT *PURGES* THE DISC.

AS OF NOW, THE LITTLE PIECE OF *PLASTIC* IN MY *HEAD* IS *PRICELESS*.

AND THE ONLY MAN WHO HAS A *HINT* OF WHAT I KNOW IS PLAYING *CAT* AND *MOUSE* WITH...

RING

MY MESSAGE, THEN *PERRY*, BREATHING HEAVY...

YOU KNOW THAT *COOKIE* WE BEEN LOOKING FOR, GARR?

SHE'S RIGHT ON MY *ASS*.

AND I'M RIGHT ON *HERS*. IT'S A *SWEET* ONE.

I'M AT THE *HARBOR*. BY THE *GATE*. I'M BRINGING HER *IN*.

--MUFFLED SHOUTS FROM BEHIND THE DOOR-- HEAVY MACHINERY--

--THE DOOR IS GROWING HOT--

--I ONLY NEED A FEW MOMENTS MORE -- WITH THE TAPE--

--I RETURN TO IT--GARRETT IS RIDING A JEEP TO THE HARBOR--

...BITCH DIDN'T SLASH MY TIRES OR SCREW WITH THE MAGNUM I KEEP UNDER THE SEAT. THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME FEEL ANY SAFER.

AS I TOP THE LAST HILL ABOVE THE HARBOR, I WONDER ONE MORE TIME WHAT I'LL DO ABOUT PERRY.

AND WHEN IT WAS THAT I LAST LIKED MYSELF.

SHIT...

--THE DOOR IS BURNING...

--NEED ONLY MOMENTS--

--THAT STUPID BAYONET HE ALWAYS CARRIED...

...JAMMED SO FAR THROUGH HIM I CAN BARELY SEE THE HANDLE.

LOUSY WAY TO DIE, EVEN FOR AN ASSHOLE.

IT ISN'T UNTIL I'M HALFWAY TO THE *OFFICE* THAT I REALIZE WHAT THAT *HOLE* ABOVE PERRY'S *FACE* MEANS.

BITCH DID HER *HOMEWORK*. KNOWS ABOUT THE *IMPLANTS*.

A *COOLER* FULL OF ICE AND *BEERS*.

THREE DEAD *SOLDIERS*.

PAPERS-- MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS-- WHAT'S SHE WANT WITH--

--ALL OF A SUDDEN THAT *COLD* THING WRAPS CLEAR *AROUND* MY SPINE--HALF THE *FILES* HAVEN'T BEEN *TOUCHED*--

--SHE'S STILL *HERE*--

--THAT *CHUCKLE* AGAIN--

KSSSSSH

SHIT--THE *LAMP*--

--SHOOT *BLIND*--

SLAM

SCHAKK

--A SOUND THAT BELONGS IN A **BUTCHER SHOP**--

--I TELL MY **FINGER** TO PULL THE **TRIGGER** AGAIN--

--BUT MY **GUN** JUST FALLS TO THE **FLOOR**--

THUNK

--AND EVEN THOUGH I'M STILL **STANDING**--

--THE **GUN** IS STILL IN MY **HAND**--

--OH, **JESUS**--

--SOMEWHERE BELOW MY **ELBOW** MY **ARM'S** BECOME A **HOSE**--

--**JERKING** IN TIME WITH MY **HEART**--

--**JESUS** I'M **PAINTING** THE ROOM--

--**HEAD** GOING **LIGHT** I'M GOING INTO **SHOCK** **FAINTING** I'M FINISHED IF I DO--

--I TAKE MY **BELT** WRAP IT **TIGHT** AROUND WHAT'S **LEFT**-- **SLIPPERY** BUT IT **HOLDS**--

--I'M **COLD**--

--GOD **DAMN** IT SAVE THE **HAND**--**FIND** IT--

--THE **COOLER** WITH THE **BEERS**--

--FLOOR'S **DIRTY** WHO THE HELL CARES **FIND** THE **HAND**--

--ROOM'S **SHAKING**--

--**FOUND** IT GOD IT'S STILL **TWITCHING** TRYING TO PULL THE **TRIGGER**--

--THE **COOLER** THE **ICE** YOU CAN **SAVE** IT--

--GOT IT GOD **DAMN** SON OF A **BITCH** NOW THEY CAN PUT IT BACK **ON** YOU **CELEBRATE**--

--**BEER** HAVE A **BEER** YOU'RE IN **SHOCK** YOU STUPID **BASTARD**--

--**FIRECRACKERS** WHY--

--NO-- **MUNITIONS**--

--WHY DO YOU **THINK** SHE DIDN'T **STAY** TO **FINISH** YOU--

PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE MUNITIONS SHIPMENT THAT WENT UP WAS SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR REICH, A CLOSE FRIEND OF CARLOS HUEVOS.

MAYBE SHE'S AFTER REICH...MAYBE THERE'S A REASON...

...JUST KEEPING MY MIND BUSY... IT'S FUNNY... I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE GONE.

JUST LIKE ME GOING CRAZY PACKING MY HAND IN ICE. FUNNY MOVE, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

WHAT'S HILARIOUS IS THAT THEY JUST TOOK THE IMPLANT OUT AND THEY THINK THEY'RE TAKING IT UPSTAIRS TO REVIEW IT.

I'D SLAP MY KNEE AND BURST OUT LAUGHING OVER THAT--

--IF I HAD THE PIPES TO LAUGH--

--OR THE KNEE--

--OR SOMETHING TO SLAP IT WITH.

THERE YOU ARE. DIDN'T EXPECT SECURITY TO GIVE YOU MUCH TROUBLE.

NOW YOU'VE GOT THE IMPLANT, YOU AMAZING MALICIOUS PIECE OF ASS. YOU'VE COVERED ALL YOUR TRACKS--EXCEPT ONE.

EXCEPT ME.

THEY WON'T LET ME DIE, YOU KNOW.

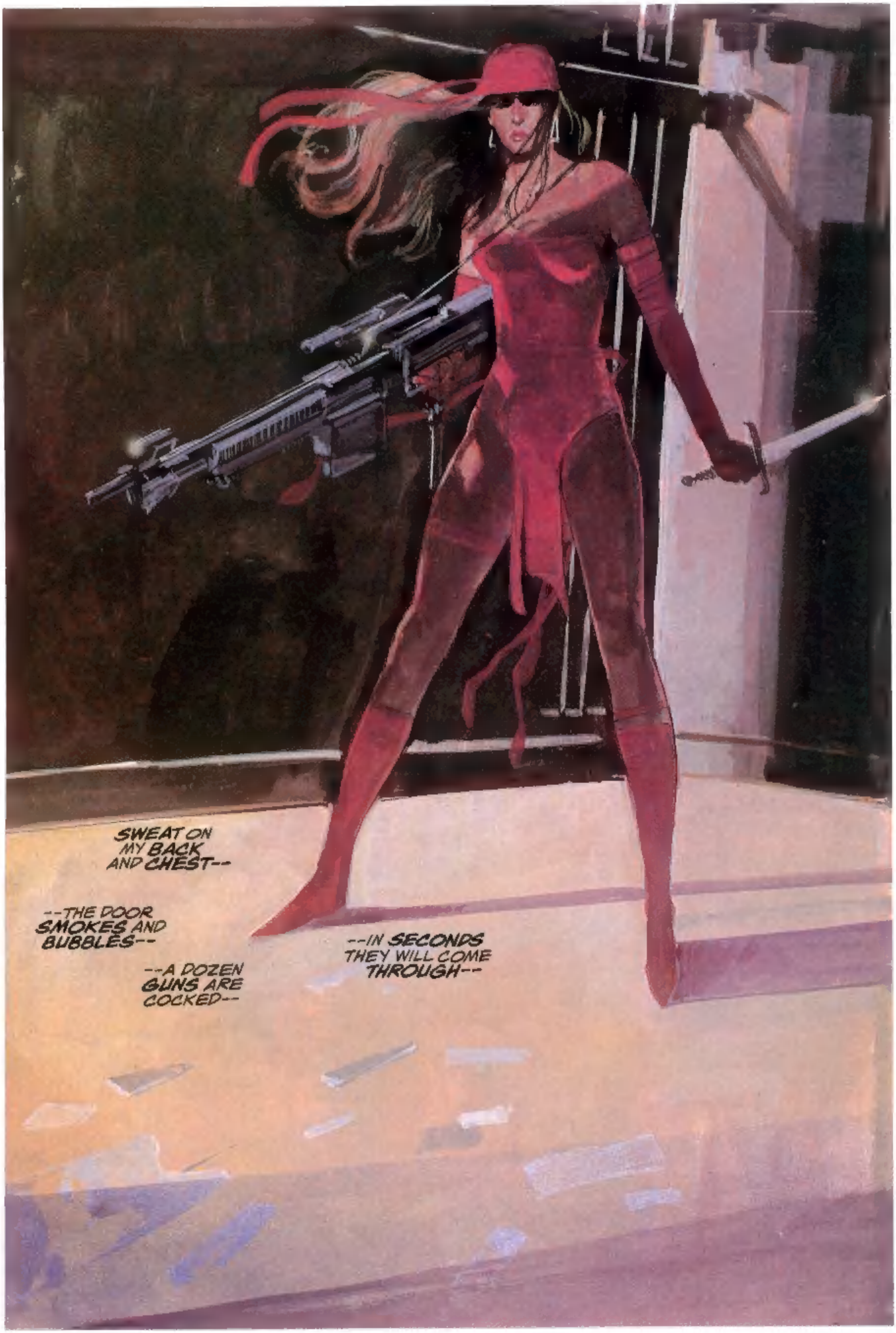
THE RESEARCH BOYS STARTED DROOLING WHEN WHAT WAS LEFT OF ME CAME IN. THEY'RE HOT TO TROT.

BUT YOU DON'T KNOW. YOU LOOK AT THE HUNK OF MEAT AND TUBES IN FRONT OF YOU--

--AND ALL YOU CAN TELL IS THAT I SO DEARLY WANT TO DIE.

MAYBE I SHOULD THANK YOU, HONEY.

YOU'VE GIVEN ME A REASON TO GO ON.


SWEAT ON MY BACK AND CHEST--
--THE DOOR SMOKES AND BUBBLES--
--A DOZEN GUNS ARE COCKED--
--IN SECONDS THEY WILL COME THROUGH--